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Journal of Latin American Studies / Volume 15 / Issue 01 / May 1983, pp 1 - 22
DOI: 10.1017/S0022216X00009548, Published online: 05 February 2009

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How to cite this article:

D. A. Brading (1983). Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 15, pp 1-22 doi:10.1017/S0022216X00009548

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Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico*

by D. A. BRADING

I

In 1799 Dr Juan José de Gamboa, an influential canon of the cathedral chapter in Mexico City, presented a lengthy petition on behalf of the Marquesa of Selva Nevada seeking permission to found a Carmelite convent in Querétaro, a city of some 30,000 inhabitants. Whereas the capital possessed twenty wealthy convents with over nine hundred professed nuns, Querétaro only had two established houses, the Santa Clara and the Capuchines. Marvelling that, whereas in France the Revolution had destroyed convents, in Mexico the Church was still able to found new houses, the crown attorney advised granting the necessary licence.¹ A handsome edifice was subsequently designed and constructed by Manuel Tolsa, the chief proponent of the neo-classic style in New Spain, and in 1803 the Archbishop accompanied the founding sisters on their journey from Mexico to Querétaro.²

Such an apparent contrast to the state of affairs in Europe should not blind us to the challenges which confronted the Mexican Church in the late eighteenth century. In the same year of 1799, Manuel Abad y Queipo, writing on behalf of the Bishop and chapter of Michoacán, roundly warned the Crown that any further diminution of clerical privilege might lead to insurrection.³ Echoing Montesquieu, he insisted that to undermine the

* Research for this article was supported by grants from the British Academy and Cambridge University Travel Fund.

¹ Mexico, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN), Historia 77–1, 7 January 1800.

² Josefina Muriel and Alicia Grobet, *Fundaciones neoclásicas: La Marquesa de Selva Nevada, sus conventos y sus arquitectos* (Mexico, 1969), pp. 35–48.

³ This memorial is reprinted in José María Luis Mora, *Obras sueltas* (Mexico, 1963), pp. 175–213.

authority of the Church was to threaten the power of the Crown; and he pointed to the example of France to confirm his argument. In recent years the Mexican clergy had seen their immunity from royal courts broken, their control over the tithe disputed, and the authority of their courts constantly challenged by the audiencia, the high court of justice. Yet the Church still exercised a formidable influence over the population, an influence hitherto wielded in support of the Crown.

Despite this pointed warning, in 1804 the Crown decreed the desamortisation of all ecclesiastical property, making the treasury henceforth responsible for the payment of interest on all capital raised by this measure. Since most church property in New Spain consisted of chantry and endowment funds lent out on mortgage to haciendas and town houses, this decree entailed a savage capital levy on the landlord class. Despite a flurry of protests from all the chief institutions of the colony, both civil and clerical, desamortisation was enforced by a corrupt viceroy, anxious to curry favour in Madrid, where the monarchy was stumbling close to bankruptcy.⁴ This measure, which alienated both the clergy and propertied class, who saw the patiently accumulated capital of centuries disappearing into the maws of a spendthrift treasury, was the last great act in an entire programme of assault on the Church, all designed to curtail its autonomy and appropriate its income.

The Bourbon attack on ecclesiastical privilege was all the more shocking since it followed so close upon a period when the Mexican Church, under the leadership of Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Eguiarreta, Archbishop of Mexico, 1730–47, and Viceroy of New Spain, 1734–40, reached its apogee. For it was undoubtedly owing to his influence that the City of Mexico, beset in 1736–7 by a devastating plague which carried off thousands of its inhabitants, acclaimed Our Lady of Guadalupe as its Patron. This proved such a popular measure that in 1747 the bishops and chapters of all the Mexican sees united to proclaim the Virgin of Tepeyac as universal patron of New Spain.⁵ This solemn act, which was soon ratified by the Papacy, expressed the culmination of a century-long campaign by the Creole clergy to encourage and preach veneration for this image. For it was only in 1648 that Miguel Sánchez published the first circumstantial account of the miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1531 to the

⁴ B. R. Hamnett, 'The Appropriation of Mexican Church Wealth by the Spanish Bourbon Government – The "Consolidación de Vales Reales" 1805–1809', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1969), pp. 85–113.

⁵ For these dramatic events see Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero, *Escudo de Armas de México* (Mexico, 1746; facsimile edition, 1981), *passim*.

Indian Juan Diego at Tepeyac and the equally miraculous imprinting of her image on his cape before Archbishop Zumárraga.⁶ Until then, the shrine at Tepeyac, built on a small peak outside Mexico City once dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonanztin, had only attracted a local veneration, and, indeed, had been sharply criticised by Franciscan missionaries as a mask for the idolatry of Indian pilgrims. But, with the publication of Sánchez' work, Creole canons and university professors vied to exalt and propagate the cult of the Guadalupe image. In the 1660s the pilgrim highway connecting the sanctuary to the capital was lined with small chapels or stations devoted to the mysteries of the rosary, and in 1695 work began on a magnificent new church. Endowment bequests mounted and in 1751 a college of canons was established to officiate at the sanctuary, the only body of this type in New Spain outside the cathedral chapters.

The significance of the cult was threefold. The narrative of the apparition and the patronage conferred by the preservation of the imprinted image was interpreted by the Creole élite within the clergy as providing the Mexican Church with a heavenly foundation quite distinct from and superior to the spiritual conquest so exultantly celebrated by Franciscan missionaries from the Peninsula. It was owing to the intercession of the Virgin Mary that paganism was so rapidly eradicated from New Spain. Far from constituting a missionary extension of Europe, the Mexican Church took its start from the apparition at Tepeyac. At the same time, veneration for an image, where the Virgin Mary is depicted as an Indian or mestiza, united the Creole clergy and Indian masses in a common devotion. That the appointment of canons at the sanctuary was made conditional upon knowledge of Indian languages emphasises the popular nature of the cult. Indeed, the contemporary historian Mariano Veytia commented that each week Indian pilgrims appeared in the courtyard before the church to dance and sing hymns in their own tongue.⁷ Finally, the cult served to exalt the primacy of Mexico City and its Archbishop, and to unite the entire country under a common patron. In all the cathedral cities and provincial capitals of New Spain, chapels and altars were raised in honour of the Guadalupe, and in many places a sanctuary was built on the outskirts of the town connected by a pilgrim highway, in direct emulation of the relation between Mexico and Tepeyac. Here, then, we encounter both a foundation myth and a popular cult, which aroused a

⁶ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe* (Chicago, 1976) pp. 211–301; D. A. Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano* (2nd ed., Mexico, 1980), pp. 26–9.

⁷ Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veitia, *Baluartes de México* (Mexico, 1820; facsimile edition, 1967), pp. 60–2.

devotion which was both patriotic and religious, the very symbol of a Church that was Creole and Indian.

In the same decades that veneration for the Guadalupe mounted to its climax, religious architecture entered an exuberant phase of construction dominated by the style generally called Churrigueresque. Once more the cathedral in Mexico City played a central role, calling in two Spanish architects to design the altar of the kings and the new *Sagrario*. The result was to introduce into New Spain the latest developments of the Spanish baroque. Thereafter, in the sixty years 1730–90, the altars and façades of Mexican churches, hitherto divided into rectangular panels, their decoration and pillars all dominated by a horizontal emphasis, seemed to dance, as the traditional orders of the Renaissance were dissolved and replaced by *estípetes*, niched pilasters and elaborate mouldings, the sculptural detail entirely subordinated to the upward movement of the entire frame. The Santa Prisca at Taxco, the Valenciana near Guanajuato, the altars of the Santa Clara at Querétaro: all offer examples of religious architecture for which the only parallels in Europe are to be found in Andalusia and Austria.⁸ To judge from chronicles published at the time, both the intellectual élite and the masses joined in acclamation of the new marvels which aroused their delight and devotion, a phase which was brought to an abrupt halt by the promulgation of the neo-classic style by the official Academy of San Carlos.

If central Mexico experienced a remarkable and original cycle of religious and aesthetic activity in the first decades of the eighteenth century, so also the vast territories of the northern frontier offered a theatre for renewed missionary endeavour. The foundation in 1683 of a Franciscan missionary college at Querétaro, which recruited its members from provinces in both Spain and Mexico, proved so successful that other institutes were established in Zacatecas, Mexico City and Pachuca. Similarly, the Jesuits moved across from their missions in Sonora to open new stations in Lower California. In 1746 a chronicle of the Franciscan missionary colleges was published by Félix Isidro de Espinosa, a native of Querétaro, who had participated in the first entrance of Texas.⁹ The picture he painted was highly traditional. Once more, heroic friars, their flesh torn by self-discipline, their nights given up to prayer, victoriously

⁸ George Kubler and Martín Soria, *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and their American Dominions 1500–1800* (Penguin Books, London, 1959), pp. 69–81.

⁹ Isidro Félix de Espinosa, *Crónica apostólica y seráfica de todos los colegios de propaganda fide de esta Nueva España* (Mexico, 1746; 2nd ed., with notes by Lino G. Canedo, Washington, 1954), *passim*.

combated the assaults of the Devil and converted hundreds of docile Indians, who, as always, soon fell victim to the onslaught of epidemic disease. Here, when in Europe the Enlightenment was about to gain momentum, this Creole chronicler relived and repeated the experience of his sixteenth-century predecessors.

The century 1648–1747, which witnessed the flowering of the cult of the Guadalupe, was a period of debility for the Spanish monarchy, a time when the vast American Empire was least subject to interference from Europe. Isolated by distance and by censorship, the intellectual élite of Mexico, virtually all of whom were priests, still fanned the last embers of scholasticism and encouraged popular devotions. Thus, if in Europe the 1680s formed an intellectual watershed, when the refurbished Thomism of Suárez and the cosmological system of Kircher were finally undermined by the new science, philosophy and history of Newton, Descartes and Bayle, in the hispanic world Tridentine Catholicism continued to generate new forms of devotion and architecture well into the eighteenth century.¹⁰ The shock of change was to prove all the more painful since the evolution of religious belief and sentiment in Mexico obviously moved at a pace which was more slow and variegated than in Europe.

II

With the defeat of the Catholic monarchies of Europe in the Seven Years War (1756–63), it became clear to their ministers that it was necessary to reform the Church in order to release resources for productive enterprise. In particular, the enlightened bureaucrats whom Charles III promoted to high office sought to exploit Spain's vast American Empire both as a market for the Peninsula's manufactures and as a source of revenue.¹¹ Both 'utilitarian and dirigiste' in their political philosophy, these ministers found little value in the religious orders, asceticism, elaborate liturgy, and popular devotion which had been encouraged by Tridentine Catholicism. Instead, they promoted clerics of a Jansenizing bent, recruited from a broad middle party in the Church, who favoured good works and simple piety in place of Baroque rhetoric and mysticism. The study of the Church Fathers and Scripture was preferred to scholasticism, and the role of

¹⁰ For these trends, see R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 432–46.

¹¹ Jean Sarrailh, *L'Espagne éclairée de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1954) p. 184; D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico 1763–1810* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 25–30.

Church Councils and national hierarchies emphasised against canon law theories of Papal absolutism.¹² At the same time, this party re-affirmed the Tridentine doctrine of episcopal authority and the fundamental role of the parochial clergy, as opposed to any medieval exaltation of the religious life.

In New Spain the administrative visitation of José de Gálvez (1765–71) was matched in the ecclesiastical sphere by the appointment of Francisco de Lorenzana as Archbishop of Mexico and Fabián Fúero as Bishop of Puebla. It was these prelates who summoned the Fourth Mexican Provincial Council in 1771 with the purpose of promulgating a general reform of the colonial Church.¹³ But their deliberations were overshadowed by the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 and the impending dissolution of the Society in 1773, a measure in which the Council fully concurred. The Jesuits had grown steadily in wealth, numbers and influence since their arrival in 1570, and the closure of the colleges which they maintained in all the leading cities was never to be repaired. Hitherto, the hierarchy had relied on these colleges to educate aspirant clergy, so that it was now necessary to establish Tridentine seminaries, endowed with scholarships for poor students, in order to procure an adequate supply of secular priests. As regards the laity, the vacuum in higher education was not to be filled until the 1860s when a positivist curriculum was introduced.

If the abrupt expulsion of the Jesuits expressed the ruthless determination of Charles III and his ministers to brook no opposition to their programme of Church reform, it should not be forgotten that the first step in this general assault was taken in 1749 when the Crown ordered the secularisation of all parishes still administered by the religious orders. This decree derived from complaints received from the viceroys of Peru and New Spain about the excessive numbers, wealth and disorders of religious communities in the New World. Acting on the advice of his father confessor, the Jesuit Manuel de Rábago, Ferdinand VI by-passed the normal administrative machinery of the Council of the Indies, and convoked a special committee of ‘theologians and jurists’, on which sat both the Archbishops-elect of Lima and Mexico, to consider what should be done.¹⁴ That this committee fixed upon secularisation as the most

¹² Joel Saugnieux, *Le Jansénisme espagnol du XVIII^e siècle, ses composantes et ses sources* (Oviedo, 1975); Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, 1958), pp. 400–27; Owen Chadwick, *The Popes and the European Revolution* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 392–439.

¹³ N. M. Farriss, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico 1759–1821* (London, 1968), pp. 26–38.

¹⁴ Archivo General de Indias (hereafter cited as AGI), Mexico 2716. The president of this junta was José de Carbajal y Lancaster.

appropriate remedy should come as no surprise since this was an issue which had divided the colonial Church since the 1570s. The heroic task of evangelising the Indians had been assumed by the mendicant orders of Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians, who in the first decades after the Conquest dominated the new church. From the 1570s onwards bishops attempted to wrest parishes from the mendicants and install secular clergy, a campaign which reached a stormy climax in the 1640s when the intransigent bishop of Puebla, Juan de Palafox, abruptly ejected all Franciscans from their *doctrinas* in his diocese, establishing a Tridentine seminary for the instruction of his parochial clergy. But his example was not followed in other dioceses and even in Puebla friars were allowed to retain their small country convents. By the 1740s at least two-fifths, if not more, of parishes in the central dioceses of Mexico and Michoacán were still administered by religious scattered across the countryside in small houses where complete observance of their Rule was virtually impossible. Indeed, small provinces such as the Dominicans of Puebla and Oaxaca, and the Franciscans of Guadalajara only possessed one large central convent and located the majority of their members in the Indian parishes. Even a province so well endowed as the Augustinians of Michoacán, with several large urban priories, kept two-thirds of its priests in *doctrinas*. Moreover, the preponderance of religious in the Indian ministry was probably greater than a mere enumeration of parishes might suggest since the districts under their control were so large that after secularisation they were divided. Through secularisation the number of parishes rose from 188 to 241 in the archdiocese of Mexico.¹⁵

Since implementation of the 1749 decree, limited at first to Mexico and Lima, met with so little resistance, either from the populace or from the religious, in 1753 the policy was extended to all other dioceses. On inspection it was found that many parishes lacked a canonically appointed *cura* or that the incumbent was absent serving as prior in an urban convent. But the high-handed fashion in which both parishes and convents were seized soon gave rise to bitter protests from the mendicants in New Spain. The Generals of the three Orders united to complain to the Crown that friars had been expelled from their cells, allowed to take only their personal belongings and at times forced to find their way on foot back to the capital. 'They were handled as if they were law-breakers, their honour insulted, and treated here in America with a hostility and rigour that was not shown

¹⁵ José Antonio de Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Teatro Americano* (2 vols., Mexico, 1746), I, 26–30; Fernando Navarro y Noriega, *Catálogo de los curatos y misiones de la Nueva España* (Mexico, 1812 and 1943), *passim*.

to the Moors and Jews when they were expelled from the Peninsula.¹⁶ It was not so much the loss of parishes that so affronted the Generals as the seizure of priories built in the heroic age of missionary endeavour, houses such as Acolman and Tzintzuntzan, which enshrined the collective glory of Spiritual Conquest. Moreover, since the incoming priest often had no use for such extensive premises, the convent buildings were at times rented to serve as stables, as popular tenements, or for textile *obreras*. The Generals predicted that secularisation would bring disaster for both religious and Indians. On the one hand the Indians would sink back into idolatry since, whereas the mendicants had always made a special point of teaching and confessing them in their own languages, the secular clergy rarely knew anything more than Castilian. Moreover, whereas eight or ten friars administered an extensive parish at a cost of 300 pesos each, a secular priest required at least 1000 pesos and hence would employ one or two assistants. As for the mendicants, they would now be forced back into the great city priories and become a burden on the urban population.

This bitter denunciation of royal policy, although supported by the Creole council of Mexico City, received short-shrift from the Archbishop, Manuel Rubio y Salinas and Viceroy the Count of Revillagigedo, both of whom counselled the Crown to continue the measure. Apprehensive of its impact on the religious, however, the Father-Confessor consulted with the Minister of the Indies, Julián de Arriaga (whose confessions he also heard), and in 1757 modified the severity of secularisation by permitting canonically appointed incumbents to remain in their parishes until their death or resignation. Each Province was to be allowed to retain two wealthy parishes in perpetuity. Thirdly, all convents which housed eight or more religious were to be returned or retained, and new churches built for the secularised parish.¹⁷ Moreover, where property belonging to convents had been embargoed, this was also returned.

With the modifications of 1757 the Provinces were given respite from immediate loss of all their parishes so that the process of reorganisation was gradual. Moreover, in the peripheral dioceses, which lacked a numerous secular clergy, further concessions were extended. In 1766 the Bishop of Yucatán thanked the Crown for allowing the Franciscans to keep the twenty parishes they still administered in his see. Similarly, in Oaxaca, the Dominicans eventually retained twelve out of the 21 *doctrinas* they had once possessed, with the Province of Puebla keeping another two they had managed since the seventeenth century. In Jalisco the Franciscans – a small

¹⁶ AGI, Mexico 2712. See also the protest of Mexico City Council, 27 July 1753.

¹⁷ AGI, Mexico 2716, real cédula 23 June 1757.

province of 164 religious – were granted permission in 1775 to keep twelve parishes for another twenty years so as to enable them to construct new priories; hence it was not until 1798 that they were finally subject to secularisation.¹⁸ In both Mexico and Michoacán, however, the policy was implemented in all its rigour.

The impact of secularisation on the Indians admits no easy assessment. Despite the assertions of Archbishop Rubio that his diocese possessed an abundance of candidates with knowledge of Indian languages, several parishes were in fact given to priests who could only preach in Castilian. Indeed, the very Archbishop protested privately to the Crown that Viceroy the Marquis of Amarillas and his wife both attempted to secure benefices for their chaplains, young men from the Peninsula, without any more qualification than their social connexion. Indeed, the Franciscan Provincial noted sourly that Rubio himself was guilty of much the same offence.¹⁹ The logical corollary of this problem was to establish a chair of Mexican language in the diocesan seminary for the instruction of future ordinands, and, on the other hand, to teach the Indians Castilian. Rubio remarked that he had contemplated the prohibition of the use of Indian languages in all administration of the sacraments, but instead decided first to establish schools in every parish, financed out of community funds. His successor Lorenzana continued this policy of discrimination against the use of native languages.²⁰ The extraordinary arrogance which animated these ‘enlightened’ prelates can be best observed in a pastoral issued in 1803 by the new Bishop of Oaxaca, Antonio Bergosa y Jordán. He positively reproached his flock for ‘maintaining your rough, unknown tongues’, arguing that with eighteen different languages Oaxaca resembled a Tower of Babel. He observed that ‘one of the chief tricks of the Devil has always been to prevent the use of our Castilian language’ and admonished his Indian subjects to abandon the use of their ‘barbarian’ tongues, which had prevented their advance in Christian knowledge and civility. Here we encounter an astonishing contrast to the practice of the missionaries of the sixteenth century and a precursor of Liberal policies of the nineteenth.²¹ In the short term, however, the problem was often solved by the increasing recruitment of an Indian clergy often financed by scholarships in the new

¹⁸ For Yucatán, see AGI, Mexico 3173, Bishop’s letter, 3 October 1766; for the Dominicans, AGI, Mexico 1308, real cédula, 4 February 1781; for Franciscans of Jalisco, AGN, Clero 4-1, real cédula 15 July 1797.

¹⁹ AGI, Mexico 2716, Archbishop Rubio to Arriaga, 1 March 1759.

²⁰ AGI, Mexico 2714, Archbishop Rubio to Arriaga, 21 April 1756.

²¹ AGI, Mexico 2651, Printed pastoral, 29 March 1803.

diocesan seminaries, who then served as assistants to the parish priests or who were given isolated country benefices.

The impact of secularisation on the religious is more easy to chart. Cut off from their rural ministry, they were forced back to their city priories, or sent to the northern missions. In 1763 the Crown demanded that the intake of novices should be reduced and in 1771 despatched Visitors to inspect each Order to frame a scheme of maximum recruitment for every convent and Province in New Spain. Some measure of these changes can be observed from the experience of the central Franciscan Province of the Holy Gospel, which covered the dioceses of Mexico and Puebla. Prior to secularisation, the Province held 35 parishes and had 88 convents to house a total membership of 840, divided between 700 professed religious and 140 lay-brothers. Left with only the two parishes of Texcoco and Toluca, they were obliged to abandon most of their small country houses, so that by 1794 the Province only counted sixteen priories and another 4 houses of recollection. The intake of novices was cut back from about 100–120 to 60 for comparable six-year periods immediately before and after secularisation. Overall numbers fell to 630 professed religious in 1765, together with 97 lay-brothers.²² Thereafter, membership declined still further since, if as a result of secularisation the great priory in Mexico City had over 150 residents in the 1760s, by 1792 this figure had fallen to 91 priests and 25 lay-brothers. Yet more ominous for the future, the census of that year only counted eight novices.²³ Much the same trend was to be found in the Augustinians of Michoacán, where the loss of 32 parishes left the Province with eleven convents. Moreover, in order to reduce numbers from 274 in 1776 to the much lower figure of 170 demanded by the Visitor, it was necessary to close the novitiate for ten years until natural wastage and the fevers of the famine years 1784–6 carried off sufficient men. By 1800 the Province had 177 professed religious, 16 lay-brothers and 10 novices.²⁴

The Crown thus largely succeeded in its programme. Parishes were secularised and small country priories suppressed. The third aim, of encouraging the established provinces of central Mexico to enter the northern mission field, was less effective. The Franciscan Province of Holy Gospel maintained a circuit of missions in both New Mexico and in

²² Biblioteca Nacional, Archivo Franciscano, Caja 127, documentos 1647–51; AGI, Mexico 3173, real cédula 14 October 1763 on reduction of novitiate.

²³ This census is reprinted in Alexander von Humboldt, *Ensayo político sobre el reino de la Nueva España* (Mexico, ed. J. A. Ortega y Medina, 1966), p. 573.

²⁴ Nicolás P. Navarrete, *Historia de la Provincia Agustiniana de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Michoacán* (2 vols., Mexico, 1978), I, 552–3, 560–6, 594–6, 719; II, 88, 158.

Tampico, but only 55 of its members served in these territories. Other provinces had even less engagement with mission activity, so that the burden still fell upon the Franciscan Colleges of Propaganda Fide which mainly recruited their staff directly from the Peninsula. Whether the loss of the rural ministry and the enforced retreat into the city priories was a cause of decline in fervour is difficult to say. But, whatever the case, all observers agreed that by the end of the eighteenth century the religious orders in New Spain had entered a phase of crisis. It was not simply that the old battle over the *alternativa* between European and Creole members once more became a matter of bitter controversy in some provinces. Rather, concern centred on the growing number of individual secularisation, by which religious obtained from Rome liberation from their vows. Both in 1797 and 1805 the Crown issued decrees warning the hierarchy against accepting any individual secularisation licences which had not been cleared in Madrid. These decrees commented on 'the excessive number of secularised religious', and complained of 'the harm which is experienced as the convents of those dominions are being depopulated...'.²⁵ At much the same time the Provincial of the Carmelite Province, commenting on the exit of so many of his Friars, exclaimed that 'if Our Lady does not deign to find a remedy, then within a few years this Holy Province of St Albert will see its end'.²⁶ Certainly, the records of the Council of the Indies for these years are full of applications from religious of all Orders for secularisation at a time when the flow of new novices had apparently dried to a small trickle. The decline in religious fervour, when combined with Crown policy, thus created a crisis which threatened the very survival of the mendicant orders in New Spain.

III

The suspicion of all forms of popular organisation displayed by colonial authorities is nowhere better illustrated than in their attitude to religious confraternities, bodies which in some cases could trace their foundation to the sixteenth century. Both their expenditure and their liturgical life proved a source of disquiet. In New Spain an enquiry into these bodies started in 1775 when the Royal Accountant of Community Funds

²⁵ Archivo Casa Morelos (hereafter cited as ACM) Cédulas reales y decretos, 1, 12 August 1805; AGI, Indiferente general 73 has these comments of the Bishop of Havana: 'there is not a convent of regular clergy in this city from which religious of all classes have not petitioned me for secularisation'. 28 June 1796.

²⁶ ACM, XIX, N.D. 34, 13 March 1804.

discovered that many Indian villages lacked any collective fund because their lands, capital and cattle had all been absorbed by confraternities whose income was devoted to 'Church ceremonies, dinners, fireworks and other useless and harmful things'. Not only did the Indians themselves suffer from the attendant expenditure, but at times royal tributes could not be collected.²⁷ On learning of this sorry state of affairs, the Crown attorney, Juan Antonio de Areche, whose Visitation in Peru was later to provoke the Tupac Amaru rebellion, at once called for the suppression of all these confraternities and the return of their property to the villages. Similarly, the Bishop of Oaxaca suggested that each village should be allowed only one brotherhood, in which were to be enrolled all its adult members, with a small charge made for the upkeep of the local church and its liturgy.

These suggestions were not implemented, and intervention was limited to declarations that confraternities and their goods were temporal rather than spiritual in nature and hence not in any way exempt from royal jurisdiction and taxation. But then, in 1791, decrees were issued demanding that a royal official must be present at all confraternity meetings. Intendants were instructed to treat all unauthorised meetings as 'clandestine and illegitimate' and ordered to investigate the foundation licenses of all confraternities in their province. The result was to show that very few of these societies had obtained royal license or had proper constitutions. In 1794 the Archbishop Alonso Nuñez de Haro informed the Viceroy that he had enumerated no less than 951 confraternities, brotherhoods and congregations in his diocese, of which he had already abolished 500. However, he suggested caution where Indians were concerned since they were 'very tenacious in maintaining their customs and devotions' and might well riot if their brotherhoods were suppressed. He stated that provided the parish priest or a royal magistrate was present at their meetings no harm would come from their continued existence.²⁸ For the rest, he suggested that the Viceroy be empowered to approve new foundations and existing constitutions since it was far too costly for most associations to solicit the requisite papers in Madrid.

In 1796, however, the Crown ordered that all existing confraternities had to obtain a licence from the Council of the Indies, submitting copies of their constitutions for approval. Thus, under threat of immediate extinction, Mexican confraternities had to revise their ordinances, often in force since the seventeenth century, and, at considerable expense, submit to bureaucratic review. Even then approval was not always forthcoming.

²⁷ AGN, Obispos 18, Contador de propios y arbitrios; Bishop of Oaxaca, 5 May 1778.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Archbishop Haro to Viceroy Revillagigedo, 24 May 1794.

When in 1796 four confraternities of Toluca, dedicated respectively to the Holy Sacrament, the Holy Cross, St Febronia, and the Rosary and Holy Souls, applied to the Council of the Indies, the *Fiscal* roundly denounced:

the prejudice and disorder produced by the countless number of guild-confraternities and other bodies which through whim, seduction or vanity have been established and are increasing every day in the churches of both the regular and secular clergy, in chapels and convents, throughout the Dominions of the Indies... all redounding to public harm by reason of the weekly contributions, the excessive costs of the mayordomias, through which countless families of poor subjects are ruined every year.

His suggestion that only two confraternities, dedicated to the Divine Sacrament and Holy Souls, should be allowed and the rest prohibited, was accepted by the Council of the Indies.²⁹ Whether their subsequent decree was ever put into effect remains uncertain.

The difficulties which lay in wait for confraternities seeking approval can be further observed in a case from Calimaya in Tenango de Valle, where since 1785 parishioners had petitioned for permission to establish a confraternity dedicated to St Joseph and Holy Souls. It was in 1802 that the same *Fiscal* of the Council of the Indies reviewed their proposed ordinances and strongly objected to the provision of 25 pesos for the funeral of their members, arguing that brothers should not be given a more elaborate ceremony than what was appropriate to their social class. Surplus funds should be spent 'in succour of poor prisoners or the sick or other useful things for their neighbourhood'. More generally, he suggested that all other confraternities in the parish church should be abolished, and asked that the Viceroy be exhorted 'to render uniform and organise these useful establishments which sustain the liturgy, benefit the souls of the departed and remedy the necessities of the ill and invalid'. Returning to his previous proposal, he advocated the amalgamation of these societies, retaining only two dedicated to the Divine Sacrament and Holy Souls, with the aim of supporting the liturgy and paying funeral costs.³⁰ In these proposals, we encounter evidence of the reiterated ambition of the Bourbon bureaucracy to regulate all aspects of social life in Mexico, ambitions, we may suspect, more easily realised on paper than in reality.

But what was the purpose of this multitude of confraternities? Were they as important or as pernicious as the *Fiscal* claimed? Before any answer to this question can be offered, it is necessary to distinguish between the various types of society all listed under the same heading. In this respect,

²⁹ AGI, Mexico 2651, Fiscal 16 October 1796.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Fiscal 3 September 1802.

the 1794 report of Archbishop Haro is helpful since he made a broad distinction between the *mayordomías*, confraternities and brotherhoods of the Indians, few of which possessed any date of erection or formal constitution, and the confraternities of the hispanic community (including mulattoes under this head) all of which had some kind of ecclesiastical, if not royal, sanction and license. These associations he divided into three categories: *retribución temporal*, by which he meant societies which charged a fee and in return paid the funeral expenses of all members; those which simply supported liturgical functions; and finally a smaller group, called *spiritual*, which obtained special indulgences in return for regular prayers.³¹ A further distinction could be drawn between confraternities which were based on a particular profession or guild and those which recruited at large from the population. What is important to note is that virtually all these organisations were self-governing, met regularly, and, therefore, were an important form of lay action. At the same time, all confraternities raised money to meet the cost of liturgical functions, thus providing an important source of revenue for the parochial clergy.

To judge from a detailed report from Michoacán in 1799, the Indian confraternities in that area did not differ greatly from the *mayordomías* described so often in modern anthropological surveys.³² Each *barrio* or ward of a village appointed a *mayordomo* who was responsible for organising the procession, mass and sermon on the feast day of the patron saint, with the obligation of providing a light repast for the participants. Similarly, other *mayordomos* were appointed to organise celebrations for such important feast days as Corpus Christi, the Finding of the Holy Cross, and the patron saint of the entire village. In these *fiestas*, however, he was assisted by Captains who organised the famous dance of Moors and Christians and the battle of the Archangel St Michael and Lucifer. Together with Holy Week, these were the chief feasts of the Indian year and were celebrated with great pomp and expense. Finally, in most villages in Michoacán there was a hospital dating back to the sixteenth century which was administered either directly by a *prioste* and *mayordomo* or by means of a confraternity invariably dedicated to the *Purísima Concepción*. In the Tarascan village of Cutcio this hospital confraternity possessed an endowment of 328 cattle and 20 horses which grazed on communal lands and a plot of land sufficient to sow about 2 fanegas of maize and a quarter of cotton. The income from this endowment was apparently sufficient to

³¹ AGN, Obispos 18, Archbishop Haro 4 May 1794.

³² AGN, Historia 73-18, has a village-by-village description; several are printed in José Bravo Ugarte (ed.), *Inspección ocular en Michoacán* (Mexico, 1960).

meet the cost of sung mass every Saturday, a funeral mass for every villager when he died, candles for the weekly rosary procession, and solemn mass and sermon on the five principal feasts of the Virgin Mary. In other villages, such as San Francisco Istlan, however, it was the *prioste* who had to meet the expense of these occasions, 'feeding those who act as Apostles in Holy Week and inviting the other natives on Christmas Eve for *atole*, the Tuesday of Carnival with *tamales* and the day on which the villages offices are taken up, that of Holy Thursday and of the *Purísima Concepción* with a small meal worth about 22 pesos'. In short, Indian confraternities were distinguished by their *barrio* affiliation, their connexion with the hospital, by the elaborate processions and dances which accompanied their chief feasts, and by the provision of a meal for their participants.

As yet, far less is known about the confraternities of the hispanic sector of the Mexican population since many, if not most, were suppressed or died a natural death in the nineteenth century. If some of the older bodies existed to celebrate great feasts, others were the religious side of such guilds as coachmen, tailors and shoemakers. Similarly, the two great parties of the merchant guild, the Consulado, each had their own confraternities, Christ of Burgos for the Montañeses and Our Lady of Aranzázu for the Basques.³³ Great disparities consequently existed in their resources, with the prestigious arch-confraternity of the Rosary in Mexico endowed with property worth over half a million pesos and other societies with one or two houses yielding rents of 300 pesos a year.³⁴ In function, the chief distinction lay between burial societies and those associations which existed simply to support liturgical occasions.

To take the case of a small burial society – the confraternity of San Roque attached to the Franciscan priory at Valladolid (Morelia) – each brother had to pay an entrance fee of two reales and a fee of half a real every week. In return the confraternity gave 12½ pesos or a Franciscan shroud for the funeral of every brother, together with a sung mass attended by all members of the association carrying candles. The confraternity also held a monthly mass and procession in the cloister, and carried its banner through the streets in Holy Week, and, of course, celebrated its patron's feast with especial solemnity. Where the funds did not cover all the expenses of these functions, it was up to the *mayordomo* and the governing board of twelve deputies to reach into their pockets.³⁵ This was a small

³³ Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, pp. 107–109.

³⁴ AGN, Cofradías 6, has a list of Mexico City confraternities and their endowments.

³⁵ ACM, xviii 359, constitution approved 4 May 1767 at petition of mayordomo, José Simón González, an Indian cacique.

association composed of urban Indians and poor artisans, but its constitution was much the same as other societies of this type: all made provision for funeral costs, celebrated a monthly mass, and entered the processions of Holy Week.

By contrast, the confraternities of the Most Holy or Divine Sacrament, at times dignified with the title of Archconfraternities, had as their object 'the most religious, sumptuous and magnificent cult of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the most august sacrament of the Eucharist'. Such societies recruited members from the leading families in each city who bore much of the expense of the liturgical functions associated with Holy Week and Corpus Christi. In Querétaro, the confraternity, which numbered about 200, was open to members of both sexes, who paid an entrance fee of 2 reales and a weekly contribution of half a real.³⁶ In San Luis Potosí the confraternity had an income of 1080 pesos a year from houses it had acquired since its foundation in 1594. It engaged in a variety of charitable work as well as supporting the local church. By 1792 it maintained its own chapel in the parish church where each year 22 sung masses were celebrated in memory of benefactors.³⁷ In short, such associations supported and organised an entire range of liturgical functions for both the parish at large and for their members, which in turn yielded an important source of revenue for the parochial clergy. Granted their importance, it comes as no surprise that the colonial authorities should have insisted that a royal official or magistrate should attend their meetings. Equally, as the royal treasury approached bankruptcy, it was only to be expected that confraternity funds should be included within the provision of the desamortisation decree of 1804 despite the prior declaration of their essentially 'temporal' nature.

IV

If the confraternities were generally too valuable to the clergy to allow their suppression, many of their public functions came to be viewed with disfavour both by the civil authorities and by the hierarchy. The result was an official campaign to prohibit what was deemed to be distasteful, irreverent or wasteful expenditure on the parade of images through the streets. It was that paragon of enlightened despots, Viceroy Revillagigedo (the younger), who in 1794 sharply criticised the processions of Holy Week in Mexico City where the leading confraternities carried *pasos* or floats with images of their patron or of scenes of the Passion, followed by the *cofrades*

³⁶ AGN, Clero 195-9, petition for recognition, 24 September 1794.

³⁷ AGN, Clero 72-19, real cédula 24 March 1791 approving constitution.

dressed as penitential *nazarenos* or armed as Roman soldiers. He complained that the populace wasted their money in hiring costumes and arms, so that they fell into debt, neglected their families, and ended this sorry career unable to pay their tributes. The processions caused ridicule and in future, so he decreed, no further uniforms or arms should be worn. His observations include an excellent description of Holy Week in the capital, with processions starting on Monday and lasting until Saturday.³⁸ It all sounds very similar to what can still be observed in modern Seville.

Enlightened clergymen shared the prejudices of their civilian mentors. They were no longer willing to countenance the cheerful mingling of temporal and liturgical celebration so typical of Tridentine Catholicism. They sought to ban popular fiestas and carnivals. Thus, in 1804 the Bishop of Michoacán, Antonio de San Miguel, prohibited the processions and floats which were staged in several towns of the Bajío on Christmas Eve, since the crowds which attended these functions had converted 'this devout act into a scandalous spectacle'. In future only the image of the Virgin Mary could be paraded, accompanied by the faithful carrying candles. Two years later the Subdelegate of Celaya protested that this prohibition was greatly resented since Christmas Eve was a popular fiesta with people coming into the town from ten leagues about. It had been the custom to parade through the streets various *pasos* or images on wagons, 'dressing children of five or six as shepherds and other figures'. His plea met with temporary relief since the bishop granted a license for the procession provided that the children be properly clothed, in particular those who represented Adam and Eve, and that the function be brought to an end by 9 o'clock at night. But in 1807, after further complaints from a local cleric that the images brought religion into disrepute – he cited the dress of the Magi and the beheading of the Holy Innocents as the chief cause of levity – all further parades of this nature were summarily banned throughout the diocese.³⁹ To meet popular demand for celebration, however, the municipal magistrate of Salvatierra hit upon an ingenious compromise whereby he authorised a 'civic *paseo*' with a shepherd's hut carried on a wagon accompanied by shepherds dancing without any sacred images or figures. The diocesan authorities had no choice but to approve this secular diversion, simply stipulating that the wagon and dancers set out after the procession of the rosary had entered the Church, a striking example of the separation of secular and sacred rejoicing.⁴⁰

³⁸ AGN, Historia 437, Viceroy Revillagigedo, 18 March 1794.

³⁹ ACM, XIX, N.D. 33, prohibitions 3 December 1803, 7 July 1807.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Salvatierra magistrate 14 November 1807.

Both sets of prohibitions, it will be observed, were as much based on aesthetic prejudice as on religious principle. The images and the costumes on these occasions were described as absurd or ridiculous, and, as such, irreverent. At times there entered a note of European contempt for colonial practices or of Creole disdain for Indian mentality. Thus, for example, the parish priest of San Pedro Paracho, who confessed that he did not understand Tarascan, nevertheless, denounced the Holy Week custom whereby an Indian was chosen to represent Christ, his body painted with the signs of the Passion ‘the face, shoulders and body bathed in blood’, who was kept prisoner from Holy Thursday until noon the following day when he was taken and tried before Pilate and Herod, with all the ceremony spoken in Tarascan. The priest commented that it was all conducted ‘in accordance with the Passion but ill-sounding to my way of thinking, since I did not see anything which moved them, even in the outward sense, to devotion...when these barbarians went from house to house asking for Jesus of Nazareth’. His predecessor has wished to extinguish the practice but feared, as he did, to provoke a riot since ‘they are so tenacious and bound to their customs’.⁴¹

If the ecclesiastical authorities thus feared to meddle with Indian villages, by contrast they displayed no such forbearance with urban confraternities. The growing fissure between clerical opinion and popular religion is nowhere better illustrated than in Silao, where in 1793 Bishop Antonio de San Miguel summarily banned the parade of images during Holy Week. His grounds for this decision were familiar: the processions caused excessive expense to the Indians and led to drunkenness and disorders. The images themselves were ‘for the most part indecent in their construction and much more indecent in their adornment’ and hence brought religion into ridicule. The populace did not want silent, pious processions, but rather occasions which would satisfy their inclination for ‘uproar, puerile ostentation and pernicious meetings’.⁴²

⁴¹ ACM, xviii 648, Vicente de Loreda, 31 March 1788.

⁴² The entire case can be found in AGN, Historia 437. Petitions of mayordomos 3 April 1797; Bishop to Viceroy, 1 June 1798. The original Spanish is as follows: ‘...que la devoción de los fieles, principalmente de los pobres ignorantes, se va entibiando notablemente y acaso ha quedado solo en una sombra y de hay necesariamente es fuerza que se siga mayor relajación de costumbres, por el mismo caso de que les faltan estas vivas representaciones o imágenes, que son las que les causan impresión para que formen algún concepto o idea de los sublimes misterios de la religión porque su rusticidad e ignorancia, muchas veces no cede, o se da vencida a la explicación de las palabras, por muy claras que sean, si a esto también no se les añade un objeto que se les entre por la vista o que pueda acomodarse para tocarlo con lo material de los sentidos, mejor que comprenderlo por medio del discurso o de cualesquiera otra operación o

What makes this case unusual, however, was not the prohibition and prejudice of the Bishop but rather the defence offered by the *mayordomos* of the confraternities, who described themselves as Indian tributaries, '*ladinos*' in the Castilian tongue, representing the artisan guilds of Silao. They complained that the country-folk, *rancheros* and Indians, who used to attend the Holy Week celebrations in Silao, no longer came to town but sought out more distant places where processions were still held. Commerce had suffered. Equally important, they argued that the faith of common people was now growing cold since it lacked the stimulus of spectacle and physical representation. In a passage which deserves to be quoted in its entirety they set out the case against the prohibitions of the Jansenizing clergy.

The devotion of the faithful, especially of the poor and ignorant, is becoming lukewarm and soon will arrive at a mere shadow... for the very reason that they lack those living representations or images which so create an impression on them that they form some idea or concept of the sublime mysteries of faith, because their rusticity and ignorance does not yield or let itself be conquered by any explanation in words, no matter how clear, unless there is not added an object which teaches them by sight or can be so adapted as to teach them through the material of their senses... Which is to say, that since the doors to their intellect are sealed against any discourse, entrance has to come through the senses, if they are to perceive anything or form some idea of the mysteries of religion. Of this truth all parish priests and confessors are faithful witnesses, since no matter how much they preach and explain to the people in the most simple words or with the clearest catechism, they always meet with most crass ignorance of the mysteries of religion among the populace...

Here, in these simple and at times ungrammatical words of these acculturated Indian artisans of the Bajío, we encounter a clear echo of missionary doctrine derived from the sixteenth century. The first mendicants in Mexico were soon persuaded that the best, if not the only way, of converting and holding the Indians to Christianity was by means of emphasis on collective liturgy rather than on individual morality. The great mysteries of the Passion and life of Christ were depicted and enacted in countless variations and ceremonies. It was a lesson that the enlightened

entendimiento: que es decir en dos palabras, que lo que no se les puede hacer percibir porque tienen tapiadas las puertas del discurso, se les entra por los sentidos, y así se consigue que formen algún concepto de los misterios de la religión. De esta verdad pueden ser testigos fidedignos todos los curas y confesores, pues por más que se predique y se explique al pueblo, con las palabras más rurales, o con el más claro y vulgar catecismo, siempre se encuentra en la gente de la plebe una crasísima ignorancia de los misterios de la religión, no por falta de enseñanza y doctrina de los pastores, pues es bien notorio su celo, sino por falta de comprensión de las ovejas.'

clergy of the late eighteenth century chose to ignore, more persuaded of the necessity of good taste and sober piety. Whereas the baroque culture of late Tridentine Catholicism had succeeded in uniting both intellectual élite and the masses in common devotion and equal aesthetic delight, by contrast its repudiation led to a growing division between educated opinion and popular religion.

V

In 1805 the *Fiscal* of the Council of the Indies received a denunciation of an elaborate annual procession which had been organised in recent years by a leading prebendary of the Cathedral chapter in Mexico City for the purpose of soliciting alms to obtain the canonization of Blessed Felipe de Jesús, a Mexican-born Franciscan martyred in Japan.⁴³ According to the informant, the procession from the cathedral to the convent of San Francisco began with fifteen images of the martyr carried by the city guilds, with accompanying floats depicting scenes from his life, some of which were done in grotesque style, with a Devil in horns and tail dressed in the most recent dandy fashion and a Chinese torturer with a Jacobin cap. Then there followed the religious communities, the university, the cathedral chapter with its choir, and the city council with three bands and a picket of soldiers, all parading along streets lined with coaches and crowded with people. Needless to say, the royal attorney deplored such a ridiculous spectacle enacted in a capital as civilised as Mexico. He demanded that the prebendary be reprimanded, the collection of alms suspended and the procession banned. In this instance, however, the Council of the Indies decided to listen to the comments of the Viceroy and Archbishop, both of whom advised caution. For the prebendary, José Joaquín Ladrón de Guevara, was son of the venerable Creole regent of the audiencia, and backed by the city council and university, both bastions of the Creole interest. Moreover, the parish priests of the capital warned that the cause of Felipe de Jesús enjoyed widespread support among the populace, and any attempt to ban the procession might lead to disturbances. Guevara himself declared warmly that all *Americanos* venerated their martyred compatriot and lived in hope of seeing their country endowed with an American saint. In the light of these reports, the diocesan authorities chose to allow the processions to continue.

It was at much the same time that the newly arrived Archbishop, Francisco Javier de Lizana, warned ministers in Madrid about the dangers

⁴³ AGI, Mexico 2693, *Fiscal's comment* 12 February 1807.

of allowing the royal courts and magistrates to undermine episcopal jurisdiction by accepting the appeals known as *recursos de fuerza*, a device which threatened to nullify the operations of diocesan courts. At the same time he deplored the ease with which religious obtained individual secularisations, a trend which might well undermine the position of the Orders. In all this he perceived dangers for Spain since the colonial system had depended on the loyalty of the clergy, since 'he who has the *curas*, has the Indians'.⁴⁴ These premonitory words were ignored, however, and with desamortisation all the multiple institutions of the Church suffered peremptory extortion of endowment capital built up over nearly three centuries.

This assault on clerical property and privilege was all the more dangerous because, if the religious orders had entered a permanent decline, the secular clergy were on the increase. The greater number of available parishes and the opening of Tridentine seminaries endowed with scholarships had made the priesthood a more attractive career for men of some ability and few means. Indeed, the necessity of catering for Indian parishes had driven bishops to admit candidates for the special purpose of this rural ministry. For example, in 1770 the Bishop of Michoacán, Pedro Anselmo Sánchez de Tagle, proudly opened his new seminary, a grandiose building situated on the main street of Valladolid (modern Morelia) directly opposite the cathedral. Each year the college offered thirty scholarships for candidates to the priesthood, including six reserved for Indian caciques. Other students were charged a fee of 100 pesos.⁴⁵ The result was an influx into the Church of men who sought a comfortable livelihood or an income to support their families.

In 1811 Manuel Abad y Queipo, by then bishop-elect of Michoacán, judged that 'the clergy have increased excessively in number', since, whereas the secular priests in his diocese numbered over 1200, there were still only 114 parishes and 38 endowed sacristries to support them. Of the thousand or more priests left without benefice or fixed abode, he calculated that only about a half were engaged in the exercise of their ministry, serving as curates or chaplains, so that 'the other 500 remain without occupation or prospects, in a state of indigence and on the point of abandoning their orders'.⁴⁶ By this time *capellanías* (chantry annuities) rarely yielded an income sufficient to cover more than a bare subsistence.

⁴⁴ AGI, Mexico 1892, Archbishop to José Antonio Caballero and Pedro Ceballos, October 1804.

⁴⁵ AGI, Mexico 2622, Sánchez de Tagle, 20 February 1772.

⁴⁶ Printed edict issued by Manuel Abad y Queipo to diocese, 7 March 1811.

Similarly, if the incumbents of wealthy urban parishes could expect incomes of between 3,000 and 5,000 pesos, their impecunious assistants (*vicarios*) had to be content with 500 pesos or less. In short, in the diocese of Michoacán, a clerical proletariat had emerged with little hope of obtaining a parish or, indeed, of more than an exiguous livelihood. In 1809 the two *curas* of Irapuato noted that the parish, situated on the fertile plains of the Bajío, close to the mining city of Guanajuato, housed 32 secular priests. Commenting on the modesty of their attire they attributed it to the 'infelicity and misery of most of them, since even when they have a *capellanía* it is not known how they support themselves. The alms from their masses are few. The poverty and lack of means for ecclesiastics in this kingdom is constant.'⁴⁷

Our evidence thus indicates little decline in popular religion in late-eighteenth-century Mexico: the Indians tenaciously retained their round of feasts and processions, and the urban confraternities appear to have attracted as much support as ever. Similarly, the female orders still obtained nuns for their convents. In short, the long-term process of secularisation and erosion of faith which had undermined the position of the Church in Europe was barely noticeable in Mexico other than at the level of recruitment for the mendicant orders. Yet the increase in the number of secular clergy often led to the admittance of candidates whom Abad y Queipo later described as 'men of gross habits, without any idea of the honour, dignity and sanctity of the priesthood...'. In the event, neither these men nor their more enlightened *confrères* showed any scruple in turning religious sentiment to political account. When the parish priest of Dolores, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, called out the Indians in rebellion, he presented them with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as their banner. The very prominence of the country clergy in the leadership of the 1810 Insurgency demonstrates the popular strength of the Mexican Church, even if the willingness of so many priests to act as military chieftains suggests that their own sense of vocation had grown dim. It was not fortuitous that Manuel Abad y Queipo, renowned for his 'enlightened' views, was the good friend of Miguel Hidalgo.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of clerical income, see D. A. Brading, 'El clero mexicano y el movimiento insurgente de 1810', *Relaciones*, vol. II, no. 5 (1981), pp. 5-26.